Art in Place and Places for Art / Fall 2016

FWIS 117: Tuesday/Thursday, 2:30-3:45, Anderson Hall (School of Architecture), Room 153
Nonya Grenader, Professor in Practice, Rice School of Architecture with
Alanna Beroiza, Teaching Assistant, Department of English

"The creative act is not performed by the artist alone; the spectator brings the work in contact with the external world by deciphering and interpreting its inner qualifications and thus adds his contribution to the creative act."

-Marcel Duchamp

Houston is the home of many influential works of art and architecture from the past century. During this seminar, you will look closely at a curated selection of original works, installations, and buildings to understand the context and ideas behind the emergence of modern and contemporary art and design. These artifacts and edifices are the primary sources, and you will observe, analyze, describe, and review these significant works using both words and images.

A previous art background is not required. Though the visual component in your responses may be original work (on-site photography, sketches, collage), you are welcome to use existing images. We will focus on your ability to select imagery and effectively pair it with your writing to create a synergistic whole.

Learning Objectives
In sequences of reading, observing, and interpreting, students will:

- Enhance methods of viewing original work to observe nuances of color, form, style, material, massing, and context.
- Develop skills for conveying observations to audiences using words (written and spoken) and images in precise and descriptive ways.
- Learn strategies for preparing questions for active participation in class discussions and site visits.
- Apply techniques for planning, editing, and revising responses.
- Learn various approaches for synthesizing ideas in a final paper and presentation comparing or contrasting several works of art viewed during the semester.
- Understand the critical role of written, oral, and visual communication in the learning process and in academic life.

Topics and site visits include:

- **ART in PLACE:** *Twilight Epiphany Skyspace* (artist James Turrell with architect Thomas Phifer and Partners, 2012, Rice University) and *The Light Within* (James Turrell, 1999, Museum of Fine Arts).
- **ART**: Modern to contemporary painting and photography, including *Portrait of Dominique* (Max Ernst, 1940, The Menil Collection) and *Case Study House #22* (Julius Shulman, 1960, MFAH).
- **PLACE**: The evolution of modern to contemporary architecture as viewed through Houston museums, including the Museum of Fine Arts (Mies van der Rohe addition, 1958) and The Menil Collection (Renzo Piano, 1986).
- **PLACE as ART**: The convergence of art, architecture, and place, exemplified by *Project Row Houses*, Third Ward, Houston (influenced by artists John Biggers, Joseph Beuys, and Rick Lowe).
- **Making / Exhibiting / Collaborating**: A visit to Moody Center for the Arts (architect Michael Maltzan) with Alison Weaver, Executive Director.

Class structure and assignments:
Before viewing, each topic will be introduced with an overview followed by short readings and class discussions focusing on historical and cultural implications surrounding the work. After viewing, students will present and submit a concise response to describe and analyze the work. After each of four short word/image assignments, students will receive feedback and may refine their responses. In a final synthesis paper (10 pages including images) and presentation, students will select several items viewed during the semester and explore comparisons and contrasts in these notable works of art and architecture.

General grading components (specific assignments will have additional grading information) and criteria:

20% Contribution to class discussion, reflecting comprehensive attention to assigned readings and engagement with various aspects of field trips and viewings. Students are expected to be in class on time, with appropriate materials for required pin-ups, readings, and site visits.
40% Four short word/image responses (10% each).
40% Final synthesis paper and class presentation (10 pages with images).

A Exceptional work, beyond what is expected or required. Attends class regularly and contributes new and relevant ideas to class conversations and presentations that illuminate, inform, and/or challenge assumptions and perspectives. Exhibits a very high level of thought, skill, and creative thinking when preparing papers and presentations.
B Above average work. Attends class regularly and sometimes contributes new and relevant ideas to class conversations and presentations. Exhibits a good level of thought, skill, and creative thinking when preparing papers and presentations.

C Acceptable work—has no more than three unexcused absences and completes assignments, but rarely contributes in ways noted above.

D Unsatisfactory work—attends class sporadically and completes most assignments, but never contributes in ways noted above.

Feedback on your Writing:
After receiving instructor feedback on our four short assignments, you are encouraged to re-submit the revised version for grading. Before your final paper/presentation, you will prepare a 3-5 page preview (including readings, references for citation) to be discussed at your individual meeting. You are also encouraged to make appointments with peer consultants at the Center for Written, Oral, and Visual Communication in preparation for the final paper/presentation. These consultants do not proofread or edit your work, but they do provide feedback on topics such as organization of your paper or presentation, the coherence of your argument, appropriate sentence structure, and consistent grammatical errors. You can make an appointment at the Center's website: cwovc.rice.edu.

Class Readings and Discussions:
Selected readings will be posted on Owlspace in our class folder. Please refer to the class schedule for titles, dates of completion, and requirements for posting a question in the Owlspace forum section. When all readings are completed, we will have a comprehensive class discussion that will be led by the students. Each student will develop a more focused reading selection to support their final paper topic.

Honor Code Statement:
One of the purposes of FWIS is to help new students understand the Rice Honor Code and, more explicitly, to teach students the rules of paraphrasing and scholarly attribution and the appropriate uses of different types of evidence. Accordingly, FWIS instructors will take an educational approach to transgressions of these rules and respond to errors in these areas foremost as issues for grading and opportunities to correct errors, rather than as instances of academic dishonesty. At the same time, all FWIS instructors retain the authority to treat instances of repeat or egregious violations as matters for the attention of the Rice Honor Council.

Disability Accommodations:
Any student with a documented disability seeking academic adjustments or accommodations is requested to speak with me during the first two weeks of class. All discussions will remain as confidential as possible. Students with disabilities will need to contact Disability Support Services in Allen Center Room 111; Phone: 713-348-5841; Email: adarice@rice.edu.

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AUGUST

T/23 Introduction

Th/30 Discuss the word/image response and the art of looking closely. View *Powers of Ten,* a film by Charles and Ray Eames, and write a short review (dated 2016 or 1977) of the film in class. This assignment will not receive a grade but will facilitate the beginning of our semester conversation.

SEPTEMBER

T/01 Discussion: Eames/*Powers of Ten* reviews.
Part One-- **Art in place and the site specific installation**: **James Turrell in Houston.**
Discussion: The process of field documentation and creating the word/image response.
Assignment 1: A word/image interpretation of one of the two Turrell installations we will visit and **pin-up in class on Tues., Sept. 13**.

Th/03 **Site visit** and documentation: The Turrell Skyspace (*Twilight Epiphany*).
Reading: Michael Govan, "James Turrell" in *Interview*.

T/06 Discussion: Producing an effective word/image response.

Th/08 **Site visit** and documentation: Museum of Fine Arts and Turrell Tunnel (*The Light Inside*). Note that we will view future topics while at the MFA: the Mies van der Rohe building addition, Matisse/*Woman in a Purple Coat*, Shulman/*Case Study House #22*, and Cartier-Bresson/*Sawyer-Flood House, Galveston*.

T/13 **Pin-up, discussion, and turn in: Turrell one page word/image interpretation**.

Th/15 **Part Two--Places for Art: Mies van der Rohe / MFA and Renzo Piano / Menil Collection.**
Introduction of buildings and context. Readings: Renzo Piano, "Working From Light" p. 218-2 and Alvia Wardlaw, "John and Dominique de Menil and the Houston Civil Rights Movement" p. 103-113 from *Art and Activism: Projects of John and Dominique deMenil* and Peter Carter, *Mies van der Rohe at Work*, p.171-2.

T/20 **Site visit** and documentation: The Menil Collection and *Portrait of Dominique* (Max Ernst).
Assignment 2: An interpretation (word and image) of either MFA or Menil. You will select one of the two museums we have visited and **pin-up in class on Tues., Sept. 27**.

Th/22 Discussion: Return of Turrell papers and general comments regarding the opportunities for revision.
Class visit to The Center (Fondren Library) for additional information on writing feedback.

T/27 **Pin-up, discussion, and turn in: Selected MFA or Menil word/image interpretation.**
Readings: Joseph Rosa, "Selling Architecture" in *A Constructed View: The Architectural Photography of Julius Shulman*, p.88-95, Jack Flam, "On Modernism and Tradition, 1935" in *Matisse on Art,* p.71-73.

Th/29 **Part Three--Art in Place: Matisse, Ernst, Cartier Bresson, Shulman**.
An overview of Henri Matisse and Max Ernst (painting) and Henri Cartier Bresson and Julius Shulman (photography) with a focus on their connection to time and place.

Assignment 3: An interpretation (word and image) of a single work of art selected from the paintings and photographs viewed for **pin-up/discussion in class on Tues., October 6**.

OCTOBER

T/04 Return of MFA/Menil papers and continuing discussion of Matisse, Ernst, Cartier-Bresson, and Shulman.

Th/06 **Pin-up, discussion, and turn in: Selected painting or photograph word/image interpretation**.

T/11 Mid-term recess—no class.

Th/13 **Part Four--Place becomes Art: An introduction to Project Row Houses in Houston's Third Ward** including the influences of Joseph Bueys, John Biggers and Rick Lowe.
Readings: Robert Farris Thompson, "John Biggers's Shotguns of 1987: An American Classic" in *The Art of John Biggers,* p. 108-11, Vicki Goldberg, "Houston, Re-Building by Creating" in *NYTimes* and Caroline Tisdall, and "Energy Plan for Western Man," from *Joseph Bueys*, p.207-210.

T/18 **Site visit** and documentation: Project Row Houses.
Assignment 4: An interpretation (word and image) of Project Row Houses for **pin-up/discussion in class on Tues., October 27**.

Th/20 **Final Assignment: an introduction to your synthesis paper and curating a set of ideas. Submit a detailed question (from one of the previous readings) to Owlspace by October 22**-include name and subject heading.

T/25 **Expanded, student-led discussion of all readings.**

Th/27 **Pin-up, discussion, and turn in: Project Row Houses word/image interpretation.**

NOVEMBER

T/01 The Process of Making and Collaborating: **Site visit to Moody Center** for the Arts with Alison Weaver, Director.

Th/03 Turn in your r**evised** one page word/image papers for final grading.
The art of a word/image presentation. A visit from Tracy Volz and/or Reto Geiser.

T/08 Class discussion: sharing topics, focusing/editing ideas, proper form, citation, MLA guidelines, etc.

Th/10 Individual meetings for final paper/presentation (must bring 3-5 page pre-write/draft).

T/15 Individual meetings for final paper/presentation (must bring 3-5 page pre-write/draft). .

Th/17 Class discussion of issues and questions regarding final paper/presentation. Selected cover image (for class portfolio) due.

T/22 **Final paper due (all students). Final presentation (5 minutes, with ppt. or slide show) for half of the class**.

Th/24 Thanksgiving—no class

T/29 **Final presentation (5 minutes, with ppt. or slide show) for half of the class**.